Shall Man Have Air Highways to Himself? No Indeed!

Close Upon the Rudders of Male Navigators of the Atmosphere Come Women in a Goodly Group.

"Miss E. L. Todd has a new eight-cylinder Rinek engine," is an item in an aeronautic publication. It is just an item among numerous other paragraphs under the heading "Review of the Month's Flying."

A short time ago the cables from Europe carried the information that Baroness de la Roche met with an accident at the Rheims meet, suffering severe injuries. She had, it was stated, become unnerved by the passing of two other aeroplanes. One of the passing aeroplanes flew directly over her, and it was explained that the draft from its propeller made trouble for the baroness. She was the first woman to operate an aeroplane—in November, 1909. She will probably be an invalid for life. Apparently it is time to make the interesting query concerning woman's present and probable activity in the field of aviation.

Women on both sides of the Atlantic have taken numerous trips in the air by aeroplane and balloon. They always have shown a feverish anxiety to go aloft. A woman can describe her sensations better than a man. Perhaps she has more of them. The average male balloon enthusiast paws the air, so to speak, trying to find some adequate form of expression to repay his friends who clamor to know how it looked and felt. Not so the women.

Miss Margueretta King Tourison, of Philadelphia, took a balloon ride on a moonlight night. She was accompanied by two physicians, also in search of recreation and a novel experience. The physicians apparently could not voice their feelings. They must have seen the same things, but from the point of view of the great public, that delights to hear of the strange and beautiful, Miss Tourison was worth a regiment of unimaginative men. Said she:

"It was a perfect night. In the west great rolls of rose-purple clouds hung over the Schuylkill River. A good breeze bore the balloon over the Delaware, and from the basket the passengers looked out upon the city of Philadelphia, fast disappearing to nowhere. It looked like a great cloud of black velvet, upon which were countless diamonds, set in orderly row. The tanks at the Point Breeze oil works looked like fat, red mushrooms. Then we passed over on the Jersey side and the darkening twilight gathered quickly about us. The moon, first blood red, then gold, finally turned to silver, and in its white glow we saw distinctly the neat Jersey farms mapped out beneath us."

Men gather at the Aero Club of America and at the Aeronautical Society of New York, but they never talk like that. They usually refer to the moon and say it was quarter, or full, as the case may require. The Hon. Mrs. Assheton Harbord says she expects women in England to take a practical interest in aeronautics at no very distant date. In two years she has made ninety ascents by balloon. She has crossed the Channel three times, twice under somewhat thrilling and hazardous conditions at night. She expects to take up the aeroplane, or have the aeroplane take her up, as may be preferred. She expresses the following opinion:

"Apart from the pleasurable sensation of stillness, the freedom from things earthly and the pure air one inhales in the skies, there are so many points of the deepest interest that cannot fail to attract the eyes and thoughts of every aeronaut, whether novice or expert. The landscape passing rapidly below, like the unrolling of a map, is the most delightful way of seeing a panorama of any country."

Wilbur Wright does not pretend to be an authority on woman. Asked why he did not marry, Mr. Wright said: "Because my wife would object to my flying. I would not like that. And if she did not object then she would not care for me. And I would not like that, either." He was queried about woman's part in aviation in the future. "Will there be many women aviators?" he was asked.

"My! I hope not," he replied. "Women will fly as amateurs, I suppose, but I am not in any hurry to see them do it. The trouble is, the women that jump into such things are not always the kind that reflect the most credit on womankind—or flying either. They do it either for pay or to get space in the newspapers. When a woman pays $500 for a ride in an aeroplane she does not do so for the fun of riding."

But as this is the opinion of a bachelor it probably will not carry any weight with the women in the case. The most envied young woman along the Atlantic Coast this fall—there can be no doubt of it, words and actions alike bore testimony to it—was Miss Eleanora Sears, of Boston. With her open face and jaunty manner she did more than look skyward through a lorgnette and rave about that dear Mr. Latham in his admirable Antoinette. Miss Eleanora Sears pursued Mr. Latham in a perfectly proper but most novel way. She pursued him not as a woman hunteth a man, but as an international aviator might be expected to chase a contestant for a golden prize. Miss Sears wore her smile of boyish good nature and frankness along with her abbreviated skirt, and with the utmost pleasure, apparently, sat behind Claude Grahame-White, the Englishman, while together they circled the course in the Farman biplane. This happened not once, but many times, and each time Miss Sears said it was "better than the last."

And now an aeroplane is being especially built for Miss Sears, and Claude Grahame-White, whom duty called to England, has promised to return just as soon as ever he can to teach her how to go it alone among the pretty clouds. Who that has followed Miss Sears through the newspaper accounts of her various and brilliant performances on everything from skates to horseback, and now the stage, can doubt that when she takes the air under wing it will be a very bad motor indeed that will have the temerity to skip when she is in the aerial saddle.

Evidently there is a danger in the aeroplane that has not been sufficiently emphasized. It does not seem to be found any more highly developed in the biplane than in the monoplane, although in the nature of the case the latter might be expected to achieve a higher percentage of fatalities. Reference is now made, of course, to the engagements that are announced with sparkling rapidity following the excursions by couples in the latest rival of the Dobbin-drawn buggy of our childhood day. When a man and a girl sit in a heart-shaped compartment of the snug proportions provided by the Bleriot Manufacturing Company and bid adieu to the ties of earth they are soon very much alone. True, the driver of the steel horse does not relinquish the ribbons to his companion, nor is the motor yet trained to shamble along where the clouds are dense and all that sort of thing. Many brave hearts that are only weak in those matters where womankind are concerned may find ere long that the easiest way to win the divine object of their hopes will be to aviate with "her" through the "rose-purple" of a summer evening's sunset.

Count Jacques de Lesseps soared through the sunset oranges and reds at Belmont Park a few times with Miss Grace McKenzie, of Toronto. Promptly thereafter their engagement was announced by the Countess de la Bergassière, sister of the fortunate aviator. He used a Blériot, Clade Grahame-White a Farman. But Mr. White still retains the lead, as he is repeatedly credited with being engaged to both Miss Sears and Pauline Chase, the actress.

One thing does seem to be manifest, however, that the man at the wheel of an aeroplane that is travelling at the rate of sixty-five miles an hour has many advantages over the earthbound lover. The motor thunders so continuously that if his art of conversation is poor it fails of notice at the time. To keep the machine on its heavenly course he must work both arms the while his feet and head are busy, so that in the very nature of the case the girl he would win for his own sees him under the most favorable guise if she be the sort that yearns for a man of daring and coolness. It would spoil everything were a man to talk under such circumstances and the Blériot Manufacturing Company has rendered that out of the question.

There are already five women who have won aviators' licenses. They are all French and belong, of course, to the French Aero Club. Mlle. Marvingt drives the Antoinette, considered the most difficult machine in the world to operate and the most beautiful, as all who saw Hubert Latham in his Antoinette at Belmont Park will readily agree. Latham is the only man who has been successful with the Antoinette. Surely, if women in any great number flock to the fun of flying they will want to go aloft in by far the most becoming sky piece that the aerial milliners can provide. Until some messenger from Mars shows a more attractive model the hope of anything more deliciously fragile in design than the Antoinette seems remote. It is an expensive thing, another reason perhaps for its popularity among the fair contingent.

Mlle. Dutrieu qualified for her aviator's license on November 20 last before two officials of the Aero Club of France, operating a Farman machine. A new machine has been specially built for her by Henry Farman, and on this she hopes shortly to make a trip from Etampes to Orleans.

Henry Farman, the aviator, who was born in Paris of English parents and consequently spells his name Henri, had the felicity of being the first pilot to take up a woman as passenger. It was in a Voisin biplane. It was considerably more than a year ago when it happened, and the place was Ghent. His passenger was a Flemish girl named Mlle. van Pottlesberghe. Shortly thereafter Wilbur Wright, at Pau, France, carried Mrs. Hart O. Berg, on October 7, 1908, and Miss Katharine Wright, his sister, accompanied him on several different flights abroad.

The first woman to ride in a aeroplane in America was Mrs. Ralph H. Van de Man, wife of a captain in the Army War College. Wilbur Wright again was host, and the notable achievement was performed at College Park, Maryland, in October of last year. The flying machine has not supplanted votes for women in the minds of Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont and Miss Inez Milholland, but for a time this fall the cause must have suffered. Every day found the two sleepless advocates down at Belmont Park. If anything should happen to induce them to discontinue their campaign for the "votes" it would not be surprising to learn that both had started upon the engaging business of teaching each other how to triumph over the numerous difficulties that lurk in the air. Only something that would mean some kind of conquest valuable to the human race as a whole could be expected, of course, to make to them anything like the required appeal. Who will say that women impressed with the justice and necessity of the votes for women cause will not soon enough operate aeroplanes from speaker's stump to speaker's stump? It seems reasonable to presume that men in the selfish pursuit of votes for themselves will adopt the aerial vehicle to enable them to instruct the greatest number of voters in the least possible time. The question may then be asked: Will women permit the men to do it first?

If the women of America should need any encouragement the account of her flight in an aeroplane with Roger Sommer by Miss Gertrude Bacon, of London, should help some. Miss Bacon has had many experiences in the air, first with spherical balloons, then the dirigible, and recently by aeroplane. She has the gift of making known her numerous sensations. Asked about the spherical balloon when she had finished her trip, Miss Bacon described life in the basket as the consummation of idleness, indolence and drifting dolce far niente. She had noticed, she said, that "no breeze stirs, no waves lap. Cotton wool billows come creeping up, with purple shadows and fleecy outlines and prismatic rainbow effects. Sometimes they invade the car and shroud it for awhile in clinging warm white wreaths, and anon they fall below and shut out the world with a glorious curtain, and we are all alone in fairyland, in perfect silence, in perfect peace."

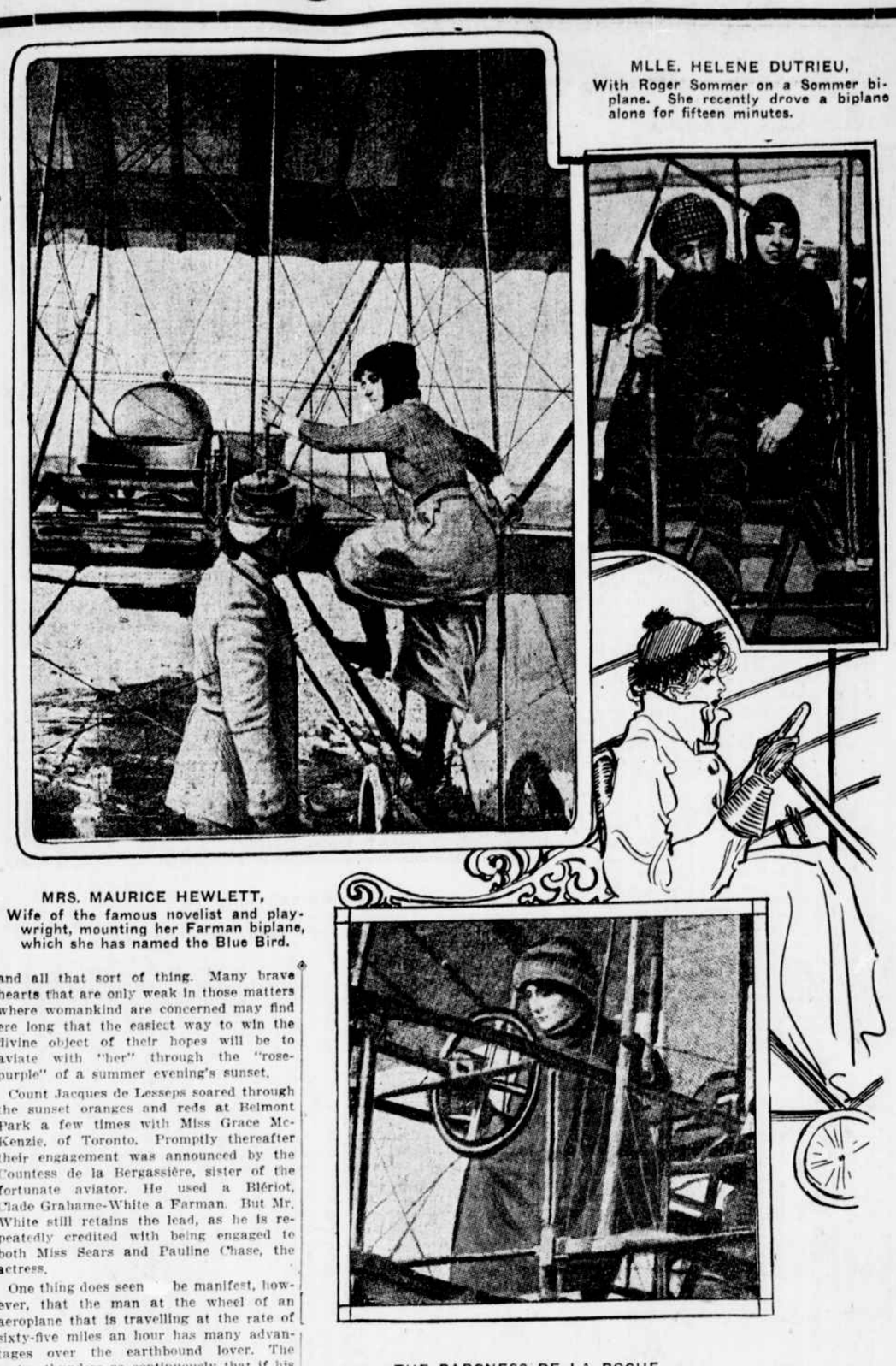
Miss Bacon has not begun to talk yet, however. These remarks have to do only with the stagecoach days of aerial navigation. When she came down from a trip with Mr. Sommer in the Farman biplane, Miss Bacon put her attention to the business of adequate expression with real results. "The aeroplane excites—wildly, maddeningly," said Miss Bacon. "Oh! the rapturous thrill of the swift plunge through the air! The glorious exhilaration of the swooping flight, the sense that never until that moment have you felt what it really is to live!

"One curious fact surprised me," she continued. "Contrary to my expectations I was absolutely unconscious of the exact moments of leaving and regaining the earth. A single turn of the propeller had started the engine. We ran along the ground. Presently there came into the motion a sense of lightness, floating buoyancy, absolutely novel and absolutely delicious. If life contains a more blissful experience than a voyage in an aeroplane I have yet to discover it."

Miss Bacon is a member of the English Women's Aerial League. The contrast is marked between her illuminating account of what a ride by aeroplane really is to an imaginative person and the statements made by, say, one of the Wright aviators after breaking a record for the quick turn, endurance or altitude. Walter Brookins, after a spectacular altitude performance that set a new mark for the world to marvel at, when asked how it seemed up there, said: "Bizzizzus!" Only that and nothing more. The way he said it meant something, of course, but it did not include one-third the things that Miss Bacon would have freely offered to an interested community.

Miss E. S. Todd is a New York woman who has been keenly interested in the practical side of aviation from the start, three years ago. She was formerly private secretary for Mrs. Russell Sage, and that generous hearted woman has undertaken to supply Miss Todd with the financial assistance necessary to demonstrate whether Miss Todd's ideas as to aeroplane construction are to meet with success. She is building a biplane at Garden City. Mrs. Frank Raiche, the wife of a biplane builder, also at Garden City, has tried to operate it several times, rising, it is said, a few feet on one or two occasions. Miss Marie Campbell, of New York City, is understood to be waiting for a manufacturer to supply her with a biplane, her purpose being to fly it herself.

Mrs. Clifford B. Harmon has flown with her husband in his Farman machine and Mrs. Glenn H. Curtiss, as well as the wives of other of the Curtiss flyers, have made short trips. A distinguished passenger at Garden City last summer was Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, who accompanied Mr. Harmon. Among the well known women whose interest in aviation was demonstrated at Belmont Parq by their constant attendance, no matter what the wind or weather, were Mrs. August Belmont, Mrs. Blanche Shoemaker Wagstaff, whose poetical drama, "Alcestis," was presented at the Hudson Theatre recently; Mrs. George Gould, Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel, Miss Angelica Brown, Mrs. Craig Biddle, Mrs. Henry Clews, Mrs. Emily Ladenburg, Mrs. H. Van Rensselaer Kennedy and scores and scores of others.



MLLE. HELENE DUTRIEU,
With Roger Sommer on a Sommer biplane. She recently drove a biplane alone for fifteen minutes.

MRS. MAURICE HEWLETT,
Wife of the famous novelist and playwright, mounting her Farman biplane, which she has named the Blue Bird.

THE BARONESS DE LA ROCHE.
First woman to pilot an aeroplane in flight.

The Bootblack Who Made Almost a Million Out of Niagara Falls

Singular Career of Joseph G. Robin, Once Robinovitch, Who Started with Nothing and Rose so High That He Is Now Accused of Bank Wrecking.

The fall of a banker who has mismanaged his bank is no new story. Like the mother-in-law joke, it hardly changes with all the years. And while there is a vital, pungent story in the great tangle of circumstances that brought Joseph G. Robin a prisoner to the bar, it is not about the rich banker Robin's downfall. It is the story of the lonely boy Robinovitch and how he ate his way like an acid through the thickly folded fabric of New York affairs. It would take Balzac or Tom Lawson to tell that story with the heavy-handed strokes that it deserves.

Robin, according to his own account, came to this country a boy of fifteen, about twenty years ago. Enemies say he was four or five years older. With him was his sister, an earnest, brilliant girl, who had studied medicine and received her doctor's degree. They had lived in Russia, in Germany, and then for several years in Paris. They were very poor. Louise Robinovitch obtained an appointment as interne in the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane on Ward's Island. The position hardly provided for her own wants. Her brother was left to shift for himself in the strange city of New York.

His equipment for the battle consisted of a good knowledge of French and Russian, a broad general reading, an unusual understanding of mathematics—he knew differential calculus—a little bad English and no money. He saw that the first thing to do was to make himself master of the language. He threw himself on it like a starving man on a tempting edible. He entered a night school and refused to take his place with the beginners in English, insisting on reciting and writing the work of the schools with the students who were born to the tongue. Within eight months he wrote idiomatically fluently and with almost perfect correctness, and he spoke without an accent.

Meanwhile he was starving half the time. He ran errands; he shovelled snow; he wrote letters in Russian and English for East Side merchants. It is said that one day h bought the outfit of a retiring bootblack and started shining shoes in Union Square. The competition was very keen. It took Robinovitch only a week to work out a scheme to fit the situation.

He got an old messenger boy's cap and fitted it with a neatly lettered legend, "One Minute Shine." He was able to make the advertisement good, and his trade doubled and trebled. In a few days he took two other bootblacks into partnership, selling each of them a cap. The three of them formed a close corporation, strong enough to suppress any imitator by force of arms, and they sold other newsboys the right to wear the caps, together with the caps themselves, at a handsome profit.

Now, naturally, such a scheme could not grow forever. As soon as a majority of the boys in the square were equipped with the caps there would no longer be any distinction in wearing them. Robinovitch chose the psychological moment to withdraw. He had kept secret the names of the hatter and the draftsman who did the lettering, and he sold the information to his partners. In three weeks more there was hardly one of the lettered caps to be seen on the square.

In his intense determination to learn English, young Robinovitch fastened himself upon the police reporters who regularly "covered" the East Side. He talked with them, persuaded them to read the things he wrote, begged chances to follow news stories with them and went out to buy them coffee and cigars. So, when a new paper, "The Recorder," was started on the most advanced lines of "yellow" journalism, Robinovitch was mentioned as an intelligent young fellow with a bad case of "news fever," and got a chance on the staff.

Here his knowledge of Europe stood him in good stead. He read the foreign exchanges and wrote a weekly column of transatlantic scandal, signing himself "Gus Podin." His other duties consisted chiefly of working up sensational articles for the Sunday edition. He did odd jobs of writing for the women's department. He wrote a novel. And all the while he was keeping half a dozen side irons in the fire—schemes for plating silverware, for starting a song publishing house, for running a loan fund in the office, and the like.

He was shabby when he came to the paper, but he drew a good salary and soon made rather a smart figure. He talked a great deal, mostly about finance and economics and his own ambitions. He spoke fast and vehemently, with a rapid flow of ideas. He was always picking arguments, in which he aired his knowledge of Adam Smith and Henry George, and spoke so boastfully of what he meant to do in the financial "game" that the other reporters looked upon him as more or less of a fool, who had "booked up" on money more than was good for him.

He had been some two years on "The Recorder" when his sister in the asylum complained of certain abuses in the treatment of patients there. She quarrelled with one of the officers of the institution and then told her brother the whole story. He saw the possibilities of an "exposé" wrote an article attacking the system and sold it to a rival newspaper for $300. Also, he contrived matters so that he was taken on the staff of the paper to write articles for the "crusade" which followed.

The sensation lasted for weeks. When it was over Robinovitch was out of a job. He could not have gone back to "The Recorder," and he did not wish to. He was born to play a lone hand. He was too keen and too sure of himself to fit well into any institution. His way was to fit institutions to himself.

For a while he drifted about New York, turning over his money in petty schemes of different sorts. And then he learned the bitter lesson that so many young men learn here every year—that the stranger is not wanted, just because he is a stranger. New York is not always respectable, but it must have a varnish of respectability on the things for which it spends its money. Robinovitch determined to prove his respectability beyond all reasonable doubt.

A man who had been with him on "The Recorder" staff met him one day standing on a Broadway corner with two men. They looked like prosperous livery stable keepers. Robinovitch stopped the reporter to shake his hand effusively—he always had a bluff, hail-fellow-well-met way about him—and dragged him into the group. He named a mining stock which he had been peddling several months before, and urged him, with a verbal slap on the back, to "get next to a good thing."

The reporter suspected that he was being exhibited as a specimen of the young man's acquaintances.

"As regards that stock, Robinovitch"—he began.

The other spread out his hands in a gesture of irritation.

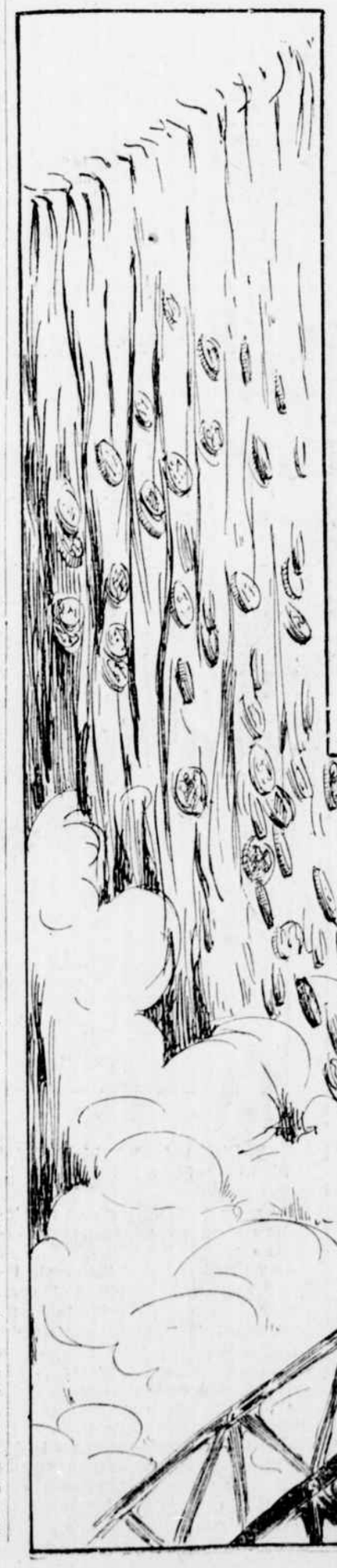
"I've changed my name," he said hastily. "I call myself Robinson now."

Harder and harder the lesson was driven home to him that there was a wall built straight through the structure of New York affairs. On one side were money and credit and work for sharp wits; on the other side were Robinovitch and a million or so of others. The name of the wall was Indifference, and its doors were locked with chilled steel, called Suspicion. There was only one that the boy had ever seen opened. That led through the office of the Charities Commissioner.

So one day Robinovitch came to General James R. O'Beirne and made his proposal bluntly.

"I've got a philanthropic scheme, general," he said, "that I think you'll be interested in. It's a plan for helping people with small incomes to build their own homes. They will help each other.'

Of course, the General knew about building and loan associations before Robinovitch told him about them, but he wanted to help Robinovitch to go on in a course that was unquestionably a good one. So the General took up the plan, introduced Robinovitch to a number of men who had money and some things that money does not always bring, and among them they organized a mutual building and loan association.



JOSEPH G. ROBIN, AS HE LOOKED AFTER SWALLOWING POISON, WHILE IN CUSTODY.

They rented a small office in lower Broadway; General O'Beirne was made president and Robinovitch became general manager and did practically all the active work—on a salary of fifteen dollars a week. That, with a "raise" which came a few months later, was all the money Robinovitch ever got out of the association. The directors were upright and able business men; Robinovitch was almost a genius at finance, and they built up a substantial and very conservative business.

Robinovitch was scrupulously honest in all his dealings with his company. He was by no means ungrateful, and he saw besides what his position meant to his future. Here was his one chance to establish himself, to become known as a keeper of good company; to study the inner workings of a corporation; to watch the ways of directors and underlings, and the cracks in the corporate structure through which responsibility is apt to leak away and be lost.

He kept turning over the few hundred dollars that his newspaper experiences had netted him, and he saved a part of his salary. He must have had a thousand dollars or so when, after a few years with the building and loan association, he saw a chance at Niagara. His name was now Joseph G. Robin. He told General O'Beirne that he had changed it because he was a fugitive from Russia and was afraid that Russian spies would follow him.

Niagara waterpower had been exploited for many years, but on a small scale. It was in the beginning of the present enormous development that Robin turned his attention to the Falls. He had used his building association well, and it had used him well in return, for now he did not go down to Niagara as a lonely, adventurous promoter, but as an experienced, reputable business man, well introduced.

He studied the engineering problems at the Falls till he had the whole affair at his fingers' ends, and then he set out to talk a power company. He talked it well, for he had a good proposition. He "interested" capital and took part in the organization of the Niagara, Lockport and Ontario Power Company. He still had his liking for respectable names. Cassius M. Wicker and George Westinghouse were deeply interested in the company. When Robin sold out a few years later he realized a profit of $1,000,000.

From the organizing of the Niagara company, the story of Robin's life has been told too many times to need repeating. Any new information as to how he manipulated the Northern Bank, the Washington Savings Bank and his various insurance and loan companies will have to come from the courts.

"He would have made a great lawyer," said a banker who has known him in recent years. "His mind works like lightning. He knows a lot, and he has all his knowledge on the tip of his tongue. If you sat down with him for eight minutes he would have you admitting that white was black. He speaks fast and excitedly, and his manner is tremendously convincing.